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ED/EC D-124

September 26, 1957

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
ECONOMIC DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman, Executive Committee
From: Chairman, Working Group I
Subject: COCOM Listing Criteria
References: WG I D-77/1, Sept. 17
ED/EC OM-23, Sept. 18

1. This memorandum summarizes the discussions on COCOM listing criteria held in WG I on September 20 and September 24. The minutes of these meetings on this subject, which are attached, amplify and explain the positions taken by different members.

2. In WG I D-77/1 (para. 4), it was suggested that COCOM criterion (c) be revised in order to clarify its meaning and intent. At the WG I discussion on September 20, the Chairman withdrew this suggestion on the grounds that the present COCOM criteria have been reasonably satisfactory, and that any attempt to clarify their meaning would run the risk of inducing other countries to suggest changes which could further weaken the entire multilateral control system. The State and ICA members concurred that it might be unwise for the U.S. to propose in COCOM any changes in the criteria at this time. The State Department member subsequently indicated that State would be willing to consider proposed changes in the COCOM criteria, but did not think it appropriate to take a position at this time on whether any proposal should be made by the U.S. in COCOM for changing the criteria. The Commerce and Defense members did not concur with the change in criterion (c) as proposed in para. 4 of WG I D-77/1 on the grounds that in their view the proposed wording did not support the control of certain strategic items. As indicated below, however, the Commerce and Defense members did not concur that there should be no revision of the COCOM criteria at all.

3. The State and ICA members concurred with the Chairman that the following language reflects in substance the interpretation which the U.S. has given and should continue to give to the existing criterion (c).

Materials and equipment which meet
all the following conditions:

(i) Are essential to the Sino-Soviet Bloc's military capabilities, and are used largely, but not necessarily principally, for important military applications.

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(ii) Are in short supply to a degree which makes it unlikely that the Sino-Soviet Bloc can meet its military requirements without substantial imports from the free world.

(iii) For which, from the standpoint of military capabilities, there are no equally satisfactory substitutes, the Bloc supply of which is adequate for military needs.

The State member indicated, however, that he did not think it necessary to reach formal agreement in EDAC at this time on the U.S. interpretation of the COCOM criteria. The Defense and Commerce members did not agree that the above language reflected the U.S. interpretation of criterion (c). They supported alternative language as indicated in paragraph 4 below.

4. The attachment to ED/EC OM-23 recommends that the current COCOM criteria be revised in several respects. In considering these proposed revisions, WG I did not address itself to the question of whether the current COCOM criteria should be revised but rather to the question of whether the proposed revisions reflected the interpretation which the U.S. has given to the existing criteria since 1954. As indicated in the attached minutes, WG I reviewed certain of the changes proposed in the attachment to ED/EC OM-23 but not all of them. It was the conclusion of the Chairman and the State and ICA members that these proposed revisions might represent a broadening of the bases for control and do not reflect the U.S. interpretation of the existing criteria. The Defense member thought that the proposed revisions might be interpreted as a broadening of the present criteria but he supported these revisions on the grounds that they would establish or reestablish a basis for the control of items which in the view of the Department of Defense should be controlled or retained under control under current U.S. economic defense policy and, therefore, reflect the U.S. interpretation of the criteria. The Commerce member was of the opinion that the proposed revisions did not represent and were not intended to represent a broadening of the controls, but rather simply a clarification of the interpretation which the U.S. has given since 1954 to the existing COCOM criteria.

5. From the discussions of the COCOM criteria in WG I, the following points seem to have emerged:

(a) There is not, and since 1954 has not been, an agreed U.S. government interpretation of the COCOM criteria.

(b) At the present time, there is not an agreed U.S. position on whether the U.S. should propose in COCOM any changes in the existing criteria; the nature of such changes, if they were to be proposed, has not been determined.

6. While it is believed that the discussions in WG I have helped to make known the positions of the EDAC agencies, it has not been possible in WG I to reach any

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agreed recommendation. All the members of WG I are agreed, however, that a clarification of these important issues would be desirable.

7. This memorandum is transmitted to the Executive Committee for its consideration, in compliance with the instruction to WG I in ED/EC OM-23, of September 18, 1957.

Attachments

Distribution:

ED List Part II
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